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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Thursday, April 7, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MORE ORANGES THAN LAST SPRING." Information from Bureau of Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

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If you have been wondering whether the disastrous storms and floods in Southern California have had an adverse effect on the spring orange supply cince I talked to you in January on the outlook for plenty of oranges, I can give you an encouraging answer. It's from the very latest report of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

To begin with, the report says that the heavy winds which swept over many sections of California in February caused practically no damage to citrus crops. Ample to excessive rains continued during most of the month, and conditions were especially favorable for size development of both Navels and Valencias. At the close of the month torrential rains and floods were quite general over most of the citrus-producing areas of Southern California. Although it is still too early (this was in mid-March) to evaluate properly the storm and flood damage to citrus crops in the southern counties, preliminary reports indicate that the loss to the crop will be slight.

However, the total California orange crop for the 1937-38 season is now estimated to be 42,252,000 boxes, compared with last year's crop of 30,063,000 boxes and the five-year average of 33,022,000 boxes. Valencias are estimated at 25,536,000 boxes, and Navel and miscellaneous varieties at 16,716,000 boxes. Much of the Naval crop has been harvested, so the storm loss is not great compared with the total.

There's the picture in California. But that's not the whole orange story. To give you just one more big figure -- the total orange production in the United States this season, it is now estimated, will amount to 68,606,000 boxes, the largest crop on record. It's 24 percent larger than last year's production and .....but there -- I said I wouldn't give you any more figures. Just remember -- the largest crop on record.

You may be interested to know which are the seven states that grow oranges in sufficient amount to ship in commercial quantities and thus rate mention in crop reports. In the order of their production they are: California, Florida, Texas, Arizona, Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi. Florida's crop is a bit more than half California's, and Texas ships less than a twentieth of California's. So it's no wonder you were concerned about orange prospects when you read about the floods.

Most oranges that reach the retail market are graded for size. Except, of course, the trucked oranges sold in bulk. The housewife can choose graded oranges according to the number packed in a crate -- from 126 large ones to 217 little juice oranges. Those that pack 176 to 200 are good family sizes, and a single one will fill a breakfast juice glass generously. But sometimes the small thin-skinned oranges are heavy with juice and so are good bargains, though you have to squeeze more of them to give the family its quota of Vitamin C.

The colored net bags used on some markets may be marked as to size by the box designations -- such as 150's or 216's -- or the number of fruit actually in the bag may be given. Either way, the thrifty buyer does a little mental arithmetic and knows how many servings of fruit or juice to expect from her purchase. For family use, buying in bags or half or whole crates usually pays if storage facilities are good.

The best quality oranges are firm, heavy with juice, and have a fine-textured skin for the variety. Do not worry if you see oranges somewhat russet in color. This does not affect the flavor. Nor do surface blemishes, slight scars or scratches, unless there are signs of decay. Soft wet spots mean decay, and you cannot cut it away in an orange as you can with some fruits. The taste goes all through the orange. Also avoid puffy, spongy, light-weight oranges which have almost no juice or flavor.

I seldom stock up with a supply of oranges which we squeeze or otherwise use lavishly for breakfast and for mid-afternoon snacks and a dozen other uses, without thinking back to my girlhood days when oranges were such a luxury that my mother would cut each one in two and serve half an orange as a great treat. It was eaten with a special kind of pointed spoon that dug down behind the sections, and you may be sure we let no smallest bit escape.

I hardly need to point out what a long way we have come from the days of half-oranges to this day of oranges by the box and bagful. And I said so much in my January talk about the food value of oranges that I am sure everyone is convinced of the need of as many of them in the diet as the budget will permit. But I might add one point, since I've said so much about juice oranges: Don't squeeze the oranges overnight and put the juice in the refrigerator, to save time in the morning rush. It's convenient, but it defeats the very purpose for which those oranges are served. The vitamin C content is considerably reduced when orange juice stands exposed to air for even a few hours.

Perhaps the best part of all my orange news is contained in an obscure sentence in the report I have been quoting. It seems that in Florida particularly, citrus trees are in excellent condition at present, and the bloom has been particularly heavy for oranges as well as grapefruit. So next year should be a good orange year, too.

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